Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing Submission,
endorsed by INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WASTE PICKERS (Part-a) FOR INC-3

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<tr>
<th>Name of the organization (For observers to the committee)</th>
<th>Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing, and endorsed by International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP)</th>
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<td>Contact person and contact information for the submission</td>
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Elements not discussed at INC-2

1. Scope

What is the proposed scope for the future instrument?

Which types of substances, materials, products and behaviors should be covered by the future instrument?

Proposed scope: JUST TRANSITION OF WASTE PICKERS AND OTHER WORKERS IN PLASTIC VALUE CHAIN.

The IAWP advocates that just transition be both a core obligation and a cross-cutting issue within the means and measures of implementation in the future plastics treaty, which should provide clear recommendations for how to implement just transition in national action plans. In line with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) guidelines for a just transition, the IAWP demands a plastics treaty that will ensure environmental sustainability, decent work and poverty alleviation for waste pickers and other workers in plastics value chains.

Similar to Article 7 and Annex C of the Minamata Convention, IAWP would like to see a dedicated Article for a just transition for waste pickers in the treaty text, and an Annex with co-developed mandatory targets for the inclusion of waste pickers into waste management practices. Considering that the primary purpose of the Basel Convention's 'Guidance on how to address the environmentally sound management of waste in the informal sector’ is to ensure the environmentally sound management of waste, rather than addressing and protecting human and workers’ rights, IAWP advocates for guidelines and toolkits to be developed to support Parties with implementing their obligations related to just transition. Materials management policies, and the UN Plastics Treaty, should include enforceable mandates for the integration of waste pickers and their organizations in materials management systems and on all decision-making bodies and processes, including clear definitions, guidelines for inclusion, and periodic targets, reporting, and monitoring- without which norms fall short of a just transition for most waste pickers. These guidelines should be developed in collaboration with waste pickers and can be provided as an annex in the Plastics Treaty.
IAWP has proactively crafted a definition of Just Transition in the context of the plastics treaty, along with its essential components, to assist member states in formulating the Just Transition Article and its accompanying Annexure. These preparatory resources are outlined below for your consideration.

The definitions of Just Transition and Waste-pickers provided below:

The Just transition has been defined by ILO as green economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities, and leaving no one behind. Contextualizing that definition in the framework of plastics treaty, we at IAWP align with the ILO in our definition of just transition, which we define in brief as ending plastic pollution in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. It is based on making visible those already working at all stages of the plastic value chain, waste pickers and other workers under informal and cooperative settings and recognizing their fundamental human dignity, and their historic contribution. It involves maximizing the social and economic opportunities of ending plastic pollution while minimizing and carefully managing any challenges – including through effective social dialogue among all groups impacted, and respect for fundamental human rights. A plan for a just transition must build and improve upon systems that waste pickers have already established while guaranteeing, better and decent work, social protection, more training opportunities, appropriate technology transfer, support for infrastructure and organizing of workers, and greater job security for workers at all stages of the plastic value chain, waste pickers and other workers in informal and cooperative settings, and all workers affected by plastic pollution. Its specific outworking will depend on local context and local consultation. The just transition framework should emphasize supporting waste pickers and other workers who are most vulnerable to occupational disruption from waste management investments and climate change.

IAWP strongly advocates for the integration of a comprehensive "Just Transition" definition into the forthcoming legal framework designed to combat plastic pollution. This inclusion is paramount in dispelling the prevalent ambiguity shrouding the concept. The current divergence in interpretations among diverse stakeholders and member states underscores the necessity of a clear definition, particularly concerning the well-being of the most vulnerable individuals in the plastic value chain, notably waste pickers.

Similar to the definition of Just Transition, we request member states to include definition of waste-pickers in the future legal instrument to deal with plastic pollution.

Waste pickers constitute most workers in informal and cooperative settings in the waste sector. At the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP), waste pickers are described as people who participate (individually or collectively) in the collection, separation, sorting, transport, and sale of recyclable and reusable materials and products (paper, plastic, metal, glass, and other materials) in an informal or semi-formal capacity, as own-account workers, or in a cooperative or social and solidarity economy setting, and as workers who subsequently achieved formal work arrangements through their organizations. Our description includes itinerant waste pickers, current and former waste pickers who have new roles and engagement in waste pickers’ organizations, and those who have been integrated
into municipal solid waste management systems and continue to retrieve, sort, and sell recyclables.

Explanatory Text:

The triple economic and environmental crises of inequality, climate change, and plastic pollution have resulted in a constant disruption of our environment and economy. Underserved communities are disproportionately affected, exacerbating the divide between the rich and the poor across countries worldwide. Waste pickers play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by working to feed our families and communities. Through our efforts, we actively combat pollution and climate change, managing approximately 60% of the world’s plastic waste collected for recycling. This significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions and prevents plastics from causing various environmental issues like drain blockages, flooding, and poor sanitation. Additionally, we protect marine life by keeping plastics from being ingested by fish and livestock, as well as preventing harmful open burning practices in dumpsites and underserved areas. Our work not only provides essential income but also contributes to improved sanitation, waste management, and environmental preservation.

Despite our significant social, economic, and environmental contributions, waste pickers often face unprotected and hazardous working conditions. We are frequently excluded from formal labour markets and marginalized due to the stigmatization of waste, poverty and our identities. Most of us operate as self-employed workers with meagre incomes, often exploited within the plastics value chains and the broader economy. The ongoing transition away from carbon-intensive industries poses a threat of eliminating low-barrier job opportunities from our communities, further increasing vulnerability.

As plastic production continues to rise, a shrinking portion of packaging is deemed valuable or recyclable. This situation leaves us, waste pickers at a disadvantage, lacking the necessary resources, equipment, and registration status to effectively compete with new enterprises entering the waste management and recycling sector. The privatization of waste, fuelled by policies like Extended Producer Responsibility and other circular economy investments, diverts valuable materials away from us, leading to uncertain futures. Additionally, we face constant disruptions caused by extreme weather events, regressive government policies criminalizing the informal economy, communal violence, wars, and changes in environmental and economic policies. These challenges hinder our ability to plan for the future, while our communities suffer from inadequate waste management, violating our human right to a clean environment and subjecting us to pollution, unsanitary conditions, poor health, social stigma, and evictions.

The persistent injustices we face can be attributed to our insufficient inclusion in policies and investments aimed at addressing climate change and plastic pollution. The privatization of waste further perpetuates our exclusion from the recycling sector, accelerating our erasure from it. To address these issues, new materials management processes must be built upon two fundamental principles: genuine inclusion with legal recognition of our work and a just transition that allows for our incorporation. Among the estimated 20 million waste pickers in streets and dumpsites around the world, some waste pickers and organizations have made strides towards a just transition, the majority
of us still struggle in conditions of extreme vulnerability. Supporting organizations that foster a just transition is crucial in empowering waste pickers and creating lasting positive changes in our communities.

2. Principles

What principles could be set out in the future instrument to guide its implementation?

Proposed Principles:

1. Acknowledge the Historical Contribution of Waste-Pickers in Reducing Plastic Pollution: Recognize and give due credit to the significant historical contributions made by waste-pickers, who work in informal and cooperative settings, in effectively reducing plastic pollution.

2. Enforce Just Transition for Waste Pickers and Other Workers Across the Plastic Value Chain: Mandate the implementation of a Just Transition for waste-pickers and other workers within the plastic value chain and include reporting on this transition as an integral component of the National Action Plans designed to address plastic pollution.

3. Ensure Adequate Livelihood Support and Income Security: Guarantee fair wages, prices and living income, social protection, and various forms of livelihood security for waste pickers and other workers involved in the plastic value chain, thereby fostering a Just Transition.

4. Universality of Just Transition Measures: Extend the measures for Just Transition to encompass both organized and independent waste-pickers, ensuring equal consideration and support for all those engaged in this essential work.

5. Recognize Waste Pickers as Frontline Communities: Acknowledge waste pickers as frontline communities disproportionately affected by plastic pollution. To this end, establish provisions that offer plastic waste and litter collection services to their workplaces and residences.

6. Mandate Partnering with Waste Pickers in Extended Producers Responsibility: Promote waste pickers' involvement as equal partners in Extended Producers Responsibility. Facilitate fair compensation for their valuable services, thereby incentivizing their continued contribution.

Explanatory Text:

The UNEA 5.2 resolution aptly acknowledges the contributions of recycling workers in informal and cooperative settings. To further amplify this recognition, it is imperative to specify the pivotal role of waste-pickers and advocate for a just transition in the forthcoming legal framework addressing plastic pollution. The outlined principles serve as a concrete pathway to achieving these goals.